

THE OSSTROCISED OTHER ELEMENTS OF DALIT LITERATURE IN NAMITA GOKHALE'S WORKS

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ABSTRACT

In 1970s the term Dalit was expanded to include scheduled tribes, poor peasants, women and all those being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion and feudal values. (Oberoi, 40) The term describes all the untouchable communities living outside the boundary of the village, as well as *adivasi*, landless farm – labour, workers, the suffering masses, and nomadic and criminal tribes. It was propounded that god created this hierarchy, so that Dalits may not rebel against the social order. Dalit rather than a caste is a symbol of revolution, inspired by hope against oppression. (Oberoi, 40) A thought process is simulated to create connection between the individuals and the community for mass assertion, protest and mobilization, by referring to Buddhism and folk lore. Dalits were members of an ancient primitive society, uprooted by the alien Brahminical civilization. Since, Dalit literature is also about women's emancipation, the protagonists of Namita Gokhale seek socio-spiritual liberation. This mute society found its hero in Babasaheb Ambedkar, and its collective anguish voiced through him to overturn the established order.

KEYWORDS: Dalit. Socio – Spiritual Liberation, Overturn Established Order **No of Words:** 174

INTRODUCTION

Discussions

Dalit literature is writing about Dalits by Dalit writers with Dalit consciousness. Dalit literature is a lofty image of grief which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits. Like Dalit autobiographies, Namita Gokhale's works are an individual's narratives of extremely cruel, compassionless pain. The ordinariness of life rather than its uniqueness is established. Pain experienced as humiliation, exclusion, or physical violence, binds narratives and individuals. Oppression does not lead to eternal victimhood, but is used as a tool to transform pain into resistance and assertion through revolution. Also, exposed is the continuation of caste system and untouchability, though it has been abolished by the Constitution of India in 1950. There is clash between the negative identity imposed on the protagonist by society and the self imposed positive identity. Alienation helps to reestablish an individual's connection with the community to gain power. Born from unrestrained anguish, this rejection and revolt is explosive and has creative energy. (Oberoi, 40) The liberation struggle of Dalits demands not a partial change but complete revolutionary change; with their literatures as weapons. They consider narratives about marginalized, untouchable and aboriginal communities based on the writings of the upper caste writers, as part of a discourse of pity. Dalit's subalternity, is eternal and unalterable as it is inherited from birth and sanctioned by sacred authority. Dalits are Upper caste Hindu's Other.

But this Other is not only separate and different, but, a part of Hindu society, occupying the lowest place in the Hindu hierarchical order and yet apart from it, inscribed in that apartness and difference is inferiority. Progress via

education and political awareness, or from village to enlightened city, seen as modernity, anonymity, and freedom from untouchability, ends in humiliation. This is an instigation to regain the rights and self-respect.

The rise of Hindi Dalit autobiography is the influence of Marathi Dalit literature. New writers emerged from various sections of society. They presented in their writings, their own language, environment, condition and issues. NamitaGokhale, a Kumaoni by birth was married to a Marathi and started writing in the 1970's. NamitaGokhale, novel *Shakuntala: Play of Memory* was first written in Hindi and then translated into English. Dalit writers' theorizing about the need, role, content and form of Dalit literature constitutes their answer to GayatriChakravortySpivak's famous question, 'Can the subaltern speak?' (The Cultural Reader) The subaltern do speak in the works of NamitaGokhale. Social criticism analyzes social structures which are seen as flawed and aim at practical solutions by specific measures, radical reform or even revolutionary change. NamitaGokhale writes about the most excruciatingly painful things. Her novels have attacked deepest fears, and have portrayed fiercest hatreds and loves. She presents the accurate observation of individual problems and social relationships. Her novels often seem to be sociological investigations of the ills of modern civilization rather than self-contained stories. The spirit of social criticism which inspires the novels of NamitaGokhale, awakens the readers from their somnolence and makes them realize how society is breaking down. There is a great social protest in her novels clamouring for revolution. The anger against ills that she expresses manifests an underlying faith in the institutions being criticized. She represents such a bleak picture of people victimized by unequal social forces and corrupt social institutions that even she, as creator of a fictional world, can find no way out of misery for her protagonists. Her novels contain insights about the social history of the collective affairs of ordinary citizens, through personal conflict.

Hindu myth is gregarious and has an insatiable appetite for co-opting anything it encounters. Hinduism is not monotheistic religion; it offers many contrary and contradictory interpretations of its myths and scriptures, leading to pluralistic and multifaceted understanding of the transient eternal world. All the convergent influences of the world run through India. India has a long tradition of argument and public debate, of intellectual pluralism and generosity. (Oberoi, 41)

The divine family of Shiva extending to the ganas, the host of ghosts, ghouls and goblins, the bhootas, pisachas, paramathas, and other demi – urges, interpreted as being of tribal and aboriginal origin, and were closely allied with the Sahmanistic traditions, remaining from ancient Bon – po religion.. All these dark, troubled and troublesome forces are the various energy emancipations of negativity and uncontrolled, unharnessed vitality that are present in every life situation. Shiva accepts all his devotees, divine and diabolical, without demur. It is said that he who is rejected by everyone finds refuge with Shiva. This process amounts to the annexation of the masses of previous cultural and social customs. As Shiva is representation of a tribal mountain god, he has mountains and wild places as his abode, the entire pantheon of demonology that he brings with him into the Hindu pantheon is thus validated and incorporated into the mainstream. Shiva's manifestations are complex and contradictory, for he is the all – encompassing reality who resolves polarities in his being. His auspicious and terrible aspects are all mirrors of the same primary self. So, why the caste system? (Oberoi, 41 – 2)

Like African American literature, Dalit literature, took the form of folk literature. (Limale). The *Dayanas* came to Kumaon region with the sojourns of the Greek and Yavanas. NamitaGokhale has listed various goddesses and tutelary spirits and heroines elevated to divinity by folklore. NamitaGokhale has portrayed the life of Kumaoni's which revolves around the folk traditions and strings of rituals. *Mountain Echoes: Reminiscences of Kumaoni Women* starts with an

invocation to the Goddesses of fruition. Use of distinct images, symbols and myths are seen in Dalit writings and religious symbols are deconstructed. Sacred to Lord Shiva the peepul tree in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, was a presence and a constant in Gudiya's life. Its leaves spoke in a sibilant murmur, and ghosts and spirits dwelt in its enormous gnarled branches. Dalit literatures' resentment is akin to breast beating. When Shakuntala of *Shakuntala: Play of Memory* started her menstruation, she was possessed with panic, because of her mother's indifference, an anger of helplessness rose and a scream emerged from deep recess.

Brahmanical literature could not wish away either the reality lurking at the edges of its pure space, or the inhabitants of those edges, the very beings who by their labour ensured this purity and freedom from pollution. Dalit ensure upper caste Hindu purity. If they did not clean latrines, skin dead animals, and remove the carcasses, the social life of the upper caste will be unclean, polluted and diseased. These are revolting activities, as are the upper caste Hindus who force the Dalits into carrying them out. In this relationship of desire and revulsion the concern is social, cultural and political.

Dalit literature moved from erasure to containment due to changing social and political consciousness.. A variety of factors loosened the stronghold of Brahmanism and feudalism. European colonism, the establishment of an English public education system, the advent of industrial capitalism, the emergence of bourgeoisie, the rise of a working class, contact with ideas of rationalism and enlightenment, and on the one hand, a nationalist anti – colonial movement, accompanied by the need for social reform. Of equal importance was that Dalit's were no longer prepared to be silent occupants of the luminal space to which they had been confined. Post – colonial thought, found it difficult to come to terms with this two – pronged move. The space that Dalits occupied outside the village was erased in the world of literature. NamitaGokhale gave space to the slum – dwellers, as slums and slum – markets come up near a construction site in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*. She portrays suburban Delhi, where huts of construction labourers, mushroomed near construction sites. In all her works she has also provided a detailed picture of their daily lives, hopes and aspirations, desires and shortcomings, their economic and spiritual progress and also their disappointments and sorrows. The reader is able to identify with the characters as they are representative of and microcosm in nature.

Besides ensuring that the Dalits were avoided in upper caste Hindu society they also made sure that the Dalits could not speak the language of the upper caste. They being polluted and impure, it was legislated that they were not to learn or read Sanskrit, the language of the God's, and the ultimate trope of Brahmanism. In *Shakuntala: Play of Memory*; Shakuntala the protagonist saw a Vyasa, a public reader of the sacred texts, reciting tales from the *Puranas*. He said that these must guarded and protected, and revealed only to a devotee, a disciple, or an elder son. Woman and *shudras* may listen to the *Puranas* from the mouth of a Brahmin, but they should never attempt to recite these. Great sages could accept wisdom from women, but the degenerative forces, throttled all attempts by women to educate themselves. Shakuntala's mother told her not to fancy herself as a scholar, as the scriptures were forbidden to women.

This society did not even merit an unmarried girl with a caste or a *varna*, even if the girl was born to Brahmin parents, like Shakuntala. Only upon marriage could she rise to the *gotra* of her husband's caste. It was in this culture that an enlightened woman like Shakuntala was born and reared. Little wonder that a woman like her, a woman ahead of her times, wanted to break free from all the shackles that bound her and weighed her down holding her free spirit hostage. She was a new woman in every sense who had the courage to deconstruct feminism.

The central purpose of Dalit literature is to enable the development of a new consciousness and identity. Gudiya, in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, passes through various experiences that brought about modification in her personality.

That is why when she looked into many mirrors, she could barely recognize herself and imagined she saw many faces staring back, and wondered which of them was her. As does Rachita Tiwari in a *Book of Shadows* having she suffered an acid attack which mutilated her face. After her altercation with Malvika Mehta, Gudiya resolved to change her name, identity, her very self. She became a creature of possibilities, unfettered by her Muslim background, her mother being a *kothewali* and her grandmother a local godwoman who offered no help in resolving these contradictions.. She became totally involved in the process of becoming a new person. She had absolutely no idea of who her father was. After considering various options she finally she settled on a tragic feudal past, and became Pooja Abhimanyu Singh. She spent a lot of time conceptualizing Pooja, her background, her family, her past and naturally her future.

In *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, Gudiya was a stranger to the paraphernalia of religion, brought up as she had been, ignorant to God and Divinity. Gudiya enjoyed a certain aura and a special status as she lived in the temple with her grandmother who was a local godwoman. The girls at school were envious of her pale – gold skin, endowed to her some Afghan forebear or *firangi* customer. This combined with her status as the Mai of temple's granddaughter, labeled her as being different from the other girls, and made her feel uncomfortable and not accepted.. Phoolwati assumed responsibility for grandmother and Gudiya. Whatever Gudiya had lost in her mother and grandmother, whose reclusiveness bordered on the paranoid, she regained in abundant measure in Phoolwati's love. Gudiya felt a strange affinity with Roxanne, as her pale ivory skin approximated Gudiya's gold-white one. Gudiya was tired of the tussle for ownership over her by Roxanne, Phoolwati, PanditKailashShastry and SundarPhalwan for she believed she belong to no one.. Added to this was the opposition of Mr. Lamba, Roxanne's husband, who made it clear that Gudiya's staying in their house was an informal arrangement and at no stage were he and Roxanne planning to adopt Gudiya. Rejecting the claims of everyone Gudiya felt free but alienated and was gripped by fear and insecurities as she was haunted by the past. Gudiya resolved that someday, somewhere, somehow she would get even with all of them. In spite of her total and consuming infatuation with Kalki she understood well that there was something noble and base about Kalki. Gudiya was prepared to live life all by herself without her husband Kalki.

Harijans and neo – Buddhists are not only Dalits, the term describes all the untouchable communities living outside the boundaries of the village, as well as *adivasis*, landless farm labourers, the suffering masses, and nomadic and criminal tribes. (Oberoi, 46) In *Shakuntala: Play of Memory*, fearing an eminent attack by bandits, Shakuntala and Nearchus traveled with a convoy which charged a small fee. It started at the crack of dawn and was led by a *sartha*. The oxen and sleek buffaloes were fed and given water. The wheels of the carts were oiled and were loaded with enormous jars of water and chests of provisions were listed and loaded. At nightfall, when they stopped at a clearing in a forest, the carts were drawn up in a circle, with the animals penned to the centre. Fires lit around the camp and men took turns to mount guard, in *prahars*, watches of six hours each. Not only the untouchables, but people lagging behind economically are also included. (Oberoi, 46) Traveling through the plains in the hot summer, Shakuntala and Nearchus saw barbarianism, with men being torched alive. The cattle starved in scorching summer so the Bomaniya tribes skinned the cattle, and traded it. The Yadavas and cow – herders were as inflamed as the low – caste Bomaniyas. They killed humans first and invented reasons and excuses later. Thus, there were more widows, more carcasses. For the nomadic and criminal minds there was neither village nor home. They had to wander constantly and beg to live. These communities had to steal to survive. Human beings were deemed criminal by birth. *Adivasis* live the life of forest animals.

Being class conscious the travelers did not eat with Nearchus and Shakuntala, for caste rules forbade them from

dining with impure foreigners. The low born cleaned the dirt of foreigners though it was outside their duties, but it also paid better than what they received as wages from local households. They were people who did not conform to the moral and religious norms of the Indo-Aryan society. They were meat eaters, outcasts and do not speak the sacred language, Sanskrit. These, impure warriors, were described as having heads completely shaved or half-shaved or covered with matted locks, and of crooked faces. Nearchus could not understand the travellers, for even in battle they continued to cook separately, each soldier tending to his own fire pot for fear of caste pollution. He wondered who could win a battle like that, yet he met a Yavana who was promoted to a Brahmin by a priest. They were known to be dwellers of hills and denizens of mountain-caves.

Since Dalitism extends to all ostracized sections of society it also encompasses women's predicament. As for the author the act of writing implies not only a therapeutic act, but also a general expansion of limits of experience. Paro's foil Priya in *Paro: Dreams of Passion* presented a different aspect of a woman's voyage to self-identification. Coming from a middle class family she was mesmerized by the sophistication of B.R. and idolized him even after her marriage to Suresh. Her insecurity had its roots in her mother's attitude towards her and she derived her worth from approval of B.R. Paro was an alter ego who had to be conquered, vanquished and annihilated for exorcising the ghosts of the past imagination and phobia. In this state of vexed consternation she accepted Suresh's matrimonial alliance. Priya refused to accept insubordination to Suresh but latched on to the last straws of her relationship with Suresh.

The commitment of Dalit literature is purposive, revolutionary, transformational and liberatory. Shakuntala of *Shakuntala: Play of Memory*, depicts culmination of the efforts of all the preceding protagonists of Namita Gokhale's works. Shakuntala hungered to see and died in the holy city of Benaras, the city of Shiva, where the faithful arrive in the hope to escape the remorseless cycle of reincarnation. The left bank *Maga* of river Ganga, a river of remembrance and forgiveness, did not merit pilgrimage. This lesser Kashi where Shakuntala and Nearchus were quartered, was host to merchants and mercenaries from around the world, This was both for their comfort and to maintain the purity of the high – priests. Those who suffered the misfortune of entering the next life from the left bank were accused to be reborn in the body of an ass. The foreigners came to the city to trade, and sometimes to study. These foreigners were Yavanas from Greece, Afrid, and the South.

After listening to the sermons of the learned *Vyasa*, Shakuntala entered a temple whose southern wall had a carved frieze to awaken the fear of retributions. Gokhale made Shakuntala perform the rites before death for both for processing the corpse and putting the spirit into a fit state to leave the body. Namita Gokhale makes Shakuntala listen to the chanting from the scriptures, eat the prasada and drink water from Ganga. However, even after death Shakuntala's soul failed to achieve salvation, as she had become a fallen woman, a *Yaduri*, because of her illicit relationship with Nearchus, a Yavana. Shakuntala strayed distractedly into the path of a charging bull. It buried its horns into her abdomen, tearing her pregnant womb. Shiva - Rishaba (Bull) symbolises righteousness, life, work, power and ignorance and also fertility and masculine principle. The bull is said to be His vehicle. A black bull or a buffalo is the mount of Yama, the god of death. Thus, Shakuntala's undoing was due to the male dominated society, the norms of which she tried to unsuccessfully defy. The apparition of Yama appeared before her; a dog sensed her pain and settled besides her, like an ally. The dog is associated with Indra, Shiva and Yama and symbolizes the four directions. A procession of five monks who chanted came into view. Along with Yama was his sister and his consort Yami, who came like a guardian spirit, she took Shakuntala's child with her. Shakuntala died in Kashi.

The facet of Dalit literature's rejection of the Brahmanical literary tradition is that it does not adhere to classical Indian aesthetics, according to which the purpose of art and literature is to evoke different emotions and feelings, such as pity, love, fear and anger. Dalit literature is neither a pleasure giving literature of fine sentiment and refined gestures, nor a narcissistic wallowing in self pity. None of the characters of NamitaGokhale wallow in self – pity, rather they fight and revolt against established norms. Dalit literature is radical because it authentically represents Dalit reality. Represented thus the untouchable Other finds its voice to speak across the caste – line and thereby destroy the vaunted purity. Ammi, a muslim *kothewali* became the Mai of a temple and was elevated to the status of a Godmother. The Dalit no longer remains invisible. This representation pollutes and contaminates. This is a deconstructive enterprise. Shakuntala of *Shakunatala: Play of Memory*, had become the fallen woman, a *Yaduri* for having lived in an adulterous relationship with Nearchus, yet in order to seek salvation she crosses over to the forbidden right bank of Ganga in Benaras.

Any aesthetic consideration of Dalit literature must be based on Ambedkar's thought, and social value. There is no “*satyam*”, in the lives of Dalits and *adivasis*. There is no evidence that the Brahman was born from Brahma's mouth and *Shudra* from his feet, or that one is born *Shudra* because of sins committed in the previous life. Also that *rudraksha* mirrors the caste system: the white ones are *Brahmins*, the red *Kshatriyas*, and the yellow *Vaishyas* while the black beads are the *Shudras*. Since there is no truth in any of this, *satyam* should really be *asatyam*.

The caste distinctions are clearly delineated in *Mountain Echoes: Reminiscences of Kumaoni Women*. The coming of migrants to the hills in the last several centuries shaped the present day caste divisions in distinct pattern of the hills. In *A Himalayan Love Story*, for centuries *Khasiya* Brahmins like Mukul had lived in the hills as farmers and pursued their Brahminical duties. Mukul is a sad commentary on the caste system that still prevails in the hills, holding the destinies of people like MukulNainwal and Parvati to ransom.

All the protagonists of NamitaGokhale's novels fought against the societal rules within which they were circumscribed. However, most of them either reconciled with their destinies, e.g. Priya, Gudiya, MukulNainwal; or they lost the battle like Parvati, who became insane due to schizophrenia and Paro disgusted with life committed suicide. Rachita Tiwari however, overcame her insecurities and returned to civilization after having suffered an acid attack in which she was wounded psychologically and physically.

Promiscuity and immorality have not been the exclusive attributes of Dalits. Promiscuity prevail in every society. (Oberoi, 55) Paro of *Paro: Dreams of Passion* drew critical attention because it dealt voyeuristically with the decadent lifestyles of the urban Indian nouveau riche. Tormented by her passion, Paro is all for frank enjoyment of sensual passions. The dancer women of the Kolhati community adorn the beds of men. These upper caste Hindu men disrobe the women who perform *nautanki*. The women dance to please patrons in order to survive. How can they be expected to show spousal loyalty? In *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, Gudiya's grandmother and mother were *kothewali*'s. Gudiya's pale-gold skin had been endowed to her by some Afghan forbear or *firangi* customer of her mother's. Gudiya mother decamped with a harmonium player.

Satyam, *Shivam*, *sundaram*, these are fabrications used to divide and exploit ordinary people. In fact, this aesthetic concept is selfish mechanism of upper class Hindu society. It is necessary to replace this conception with one that is material and social. Human beings are first and foremost human – this is *satyam*. The liberation of human beings is *shivam*

and humanity is *sundaram*. Therefore, the aesthetics of Dalit literature constitute equality, liberty, justice and fraternity of beings.

Education and the idea of democracy reached many sections of society, awakening the masses all over the country, as well as Dalits, *adivasis*, and nomadic and criminal tribes living in and outside the village. The democratization of education helped in its spread among farmers, women and workers. In *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, Gudiya's secular education continued betwixt and between environments of St. Jude's Academy for the socially handicapped.

The fear of humiliation due to conversion to Buddhism also was an acknowledgement and submission to having fallen or belonging to a lower caste. This is seen in the attempts of Shakuntala as she resists conversion to Buddhism even though she was near death. In *Shakuntala: Play of Memory*, again and again a nun who tended on her after she was hit by a bull, implored her to accept the Buddha before she died, but defiant Shakuntala felt offended. Shakuntala though married to a high caste Brahmin, deserted her husband and home in revolt to the treatment meted out to her and also because she felt constricted and contained in her role as a traditional house wife. She desired to explore distant lands and experiences.

This literature is marked by a sense of community, sharing, warmth, and physicality and also ignorance, sexism, violence, internal rivalry and conflict, competition for survival, drunkenness and death. In *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, Shambhu, the tea stall owner, made provisions for tribal tastes, by distilling country liquor. A swaggering slum lord, SundarPahalwan, who was always surrounded by a handful of goondas and hoodlums, exercised territorial rights over the make shift temple set up by Ammi and demanded money from her to stay in business. In the *Book of Shadows* magic, black arts, and the most evil, depraved and corrupt forms of the *Tantric* cults are given prominence. In the other books too the people believed in ghouls, goblins and witches with inverted feet. In *Book of Shadows*, there were presences lurking in the house in which Rachita Tiwari was recuperating after she suffered an acid attack. Parvati and MukulNainwal saw *daayans* in *A Himalayan Love Story*. Shakuntala in *Shakuntala: Play of Memory* spent a night at the *Matrika* shrine, the temple of the Goddess which was abandoned. According to the *Shastras* there was no site in the whole world more unpropitious than an abandoned temple. *Bhairavi's* influence is also felt in her novels like, *Mountain Echoes: Reminiscences of Kumaoni Women..*

Authentic representation involves an unromanticised, and un pitying reflection in literature of the materiality of Dalit life in all its dimensions. The people that inhabit these texts are not objects of pity. Their life is often miserable, humiliating and filled with daily reminders of their impurity and pollutedness. Gudiya's misery and humiliation is depicted in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, as she was extended financial support by the *bandwallaha's* when, after being married to Kalki, for days she did not receive any housekeeping money from her impecunious husband. Yet there was nothing indiscreet or forward in their behaviour and they constantly showed her the deference and respect due to a brother's wife. However, on the other hand it depicts the warm aspects of community living and camaraderie exhibited by the lower stratas of society

Dalits are signified by the wretchedness of their living conditions, their lawless or criminal pursuit, and their internalization of the oppressive ideas and habits of the Hindu caste society. In *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* Kalki, was convinced he would find himself a millionaire by earning from lottery tickets which were bought from revolting stalls situated next to public urinals. He did not hesitate to borrow from *bandwallas*. Namita Gokhale has displayed how common people today are committed to wealth creation, whatever its vulgarities. This is displayed by the slum lord SundarPahalwan, in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, who eventually lost his life because of his nefarious activities.

He was shot dead outside his house one morning. Sundar's men came and took charge of matters. As is the case with clandestine matters, they did not call the police or the ambulance, but methodically roughed up the entire neighbourhood, warning them not to talk to the authorities, searching their houses to seek the unknown assassin. The harassment meted out by the police is evident as they interrogated Phoolwati mercilessly exhibiting a total lack of concern and empathy in the face of death. The funeral was a grand affair. Gangsters, hoodlums politicians and important people from all over Delhi turned up in full strength. Gudiya displayed a great strength of character and moral values by refusing to accept a substantial portion of trust funds, in the form of stocks and securities, from Roxanne.

The wretchedness and treachery among the lower sections of society is portrayed in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*. The uninhibited tribal women were straining with strength and sensuality. A wild mood prevailed in the untidy cluster of huts near the construction site. No wonder that Shambhu fell in love with Magoo, and Magoo's husband Saboo under the influence of liquor killed Shambhu. Phoolwati had a half – brother because after her father's death, her mother had been employed in a *haveli* by a *zamindar*, thus she occupied herself otherwise. At the same time, representation of Dalit life is not limited to an obsessive self – pitying narration of the misery and wretchedness of a people incapable of acting, as it is in much of upper caste literature about Dalits. Dalits who people the text of this literature may not be paragons of virtue, but they have life, they survive struggle and often succeed, even though their Dalitness, their differentness never disappears. It is this complex reality that constitutes the Dalit's authentic experience. NamitaGokhale's novels may be considered as criticism of society. *Gods, Graves and Grandmothers* scans life in the downwardly mobile class of the Indian metropolises. NamitaGokhale exposes the humourous under belly of merchandised religiosity. The devaluation of Hinduism from spirituality to mob mentality hurt her the most. Gudiya, the protagonist's picaresque adventures cover a cross section of Indian society. Set in the back drop of semi – urban Delhi, the book effectively moves between everyday details of poverty, ignorance and illiteracy and supernatural realm of the temple, which forms the focal point of Gudiya's life. This experience is spatial as well as temporal.

Dalit literature is not ahistorical. The historicity of Dalit experience is conveyed, as has been suggested earlier through the allusive nature of Dalit writing, its strategy is of liberating and connecting the present with the past. Paro in Gokhlale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, indulged in whimsical social extremes. Paro relentlessly used the tactical advantage of her sex to obtain a victory, which often proved to be pyrrhic. It is through this weapon of sex that she endeavoured to overcome her inferiority. In her attempt to find her own self-hood, Paro a victim of childhood rape, set about mutilating, dominating men whom she encountered, denying their truths and values and destroying their superiority. Dalit writers regard promiscuity as rape, because it is the result of injustices..

Babasaheb asserted that writers must take inspiration from the greatness of the common people to cleanse the stated values of life and culture. NamitaGokhale has through her works portrayed the greatness of common people like Ammi, an extraordinary woman with remarkable *siddhi*, who through her industriousness became a Godmother.

Questions concerning today's society are of greater significance than issues of the past. It is more important to reform the faults in the people by exposing them, than to engage in titillating and entertaining aestheticism. Babasaheb believed that everyday context, ideas and feelings embedded in social interaction should be predominant in literature. NamitaGokhale attempted to give precedence to the present in all her works.

The inexperienced youth, Avinendra, Paro's lover in *Paro: Dreams of Passion*; also known as Lenin for his Marxist inclinations, is symbolically portrayed as a man whose voice had not cracked properly. There are many

commonalities between Dalit and Marxist literature. The most prominent likeness is the centrality of humans. Both literatures are life – affirming and adhere to realism and the stance of the Dalit writer is similar to that of the Marxist writer. The Marxist writer imagines the end of exploitative capitalism in order to destroy economic inequity. The Dalit writer envisions the end of the caste system in order to eradicate social inequity. The Marxist writer believes that human beings should be free from exploitation. The Dalit writer holds that people should be free from degradation, and be allowed to live as humans. Both want all avenues to be open for human beings to attain greatness, and both have voiced revolt against exploitation. Marxist and Dalit writers write out of a commitment to oppose inequality.

CONCLUSIONS

The comparison of the African Americans and Dalits leads to the following conclusion. African American and Dalit writers are searching for self – identity. There are commonalities in their pain, their rebellion, their hopes and their desires. The experiences narrated in both literatures are based on inequality, and have been drawn from social life. Insofar as African American and Dalit writers write out of social commitment, both literatures are life – affirming and share a common direction. The language of both literatures is the language of cultural revolution. And finally, there is a search for new cultural values in both literatures. They view their literature as movements for human liberation.

Babasaheb Ambedkar conscious that the untouchables needed allies for their emancipation made efforts to bring about such an alliance with natural allies. The exploited like Dalit, Marxists and African American can make an alliance.

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